

Sense and Respond Logistics Now

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Sense and Respond Logistics Now

Submitted by: Captain B.K. Sanchez

CG #12, FACAD: Major B.J. Nownes

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As we select our forces and plan our operations,....[w]e must understand how logistics can impact on our concepts of operation....Commanders must base all their concepts of operations on what they know they can do logistically.

-A.M. Gray, Jr.¹

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of logistics has been demonstrated throughout modern warfare and is even more critical today with the United States Marine Corps future vision of highly maneuverable, flexible, and decentralized operations. Modernizing Marine Corps logistics with the Sense and Respond Logistics (S&RL) approach is a vehicle for logistics success in current and future operations. This modernization approach must be accomplished today to ensure logistics shortfalls from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) I and II are corrected, thus enhancing mission success for Marines in OIF III. The Marine Corps must be able to effectively and efficiently operate in a multi-dimensional joint environment. Further enhancing Marine Corps logistics with the United States Navy will allow strengthened service capabilities through integrated logistics. With the S&RL approach to modernizing Marine Corps logistics, the full implementation of Global Combat Support System- Marine Corps (GCSS-MC) and Marine Corps Logistics Command and Control (Log C2), Marines can deploy with information technology (IT) and process tools to fill gaps for supported and supporting units.² In today's joint environment, urgent modernization of Marine Corps logistics with Sense and Respond Logistics is the key to correcting

the current obsolete and redundant logistics processes and systems.

II. OIF LOGISTICS SHORTFALLS

During Operation Iraqi Freedom the United States Marine forces moved faster and farther than ever before, but not without serious logistical shortfalls. OIF was considered a logistics war due to the extensive need for logistics support requirements of the rapidly moving Marine Corps maneuvering forces.³ Logistics made it possible for the Marine forces to maneuver as well as they did. Still, there were many challenges and shortfalls that surfaced. The greatest shortfall was the lack of asset and in-transit visibility information in the Marine Corps C2 logistics effort. It was extremely difficult to locate supply assets, identify shortcomings, and track items and movement. As a result, there were delays, supply shortages, and sometimes the failure to expedite critical supplies to Marine units. Overall, material distribution was poor. With the lessons learned from the OIF experiences, cause for rapid implementation of new logistics processes and applications are urgent.

III. INTEGRATED NAVAL LOGISTICS

Because America's armed forces need to conduct distributed, multi-dimensional, joint, allied, and coalition warfare, the urgency to modernize Marine and Navy logistics is time critical.⁴ This type of environment requires the Navy and Marine Corps to integrate naval logistics. The interdependency in both naval and joint environments and increased Seabasing logistics operations (sustainment to units ashore from ships offshore), calls for joint logistics integration.⁵ An agreement by the chief Navy and Marine Corps logistics representatives in July 2003 called into effect the integration of logistics systems, inventory management; logistics policies, procedures and doctrine; and naval packaging.⁶ These fundamental changes must continue to occur, but with more urgency than ever before.

IV. SENSE AND RESPOND LOGISTICS (S&RL)

Future Marine Corps operations require a new approach of adaptable, flexible, and responsive logistics. The old "mountain of steel" methodology in a linear battlefield environment is no longer relevant in today's non-linear environment. Just-in-time Logistics can combat uncertainty in a non-linear battlefield environment by predicting and

optimizing inventory and delivery.⁷ Rapid responsiveness and flexibility in IT and transportation can also provide effective logistics and eliminate the "mass" approach. S&RL networking enables forces to share logistic information throughout the force spectrum.⁸ For S&RL to occur, the Marine Corps must pursue a network based approach to integrate operations and modernize logistics.

V. MODERNIZING LOGISTICS

The focus on modernizing USMC logistics must be renewed for improving the overall effectiveness of the MAGTF expeditionary capability. This goal requires the use of IT products and practices that have been successfully utilized in modern business sector practices and the Department of Defence (DOD).⁹ The Marine Corps Logistics Operational Architecture helps define logistical roles, functions, processes, and techniques and procedures.¹⁰ Utilizing an expeditionary logistics template, an end-to-end logistics function, and maintaining logistical effectiveness in a limited bandwidth environment is no easy feat.¹¹ The Marine Corps must continue to make strides towards full implementation.

Global Combat Support System- Marine Corps (GCSS-MC)

The designation of the family of the Global Combat

Support System by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) and the GCSS General Officer Steering Committee (GOSC) for the United States Armed Forces has provided a vehicle to acquire and integrate IT tools that support the MAGTF, combatant commander, and joint task force (CC/JTF) requirements.¹² GCSS-MC Logistics Operational Architecture better integrates supply, logistics, distribution, and fiscal processes. With a web-based portal for requesting products and services, and a logistics C2 capability, information can be shared across the Marine Corps and other services and agencies. Set for implementation in 2005, GCSS-MC will utilize a portfolio of deployable off-the-shelf IT capabilities that support peacetime and deployed logistics requirements.¹³

Marine Corps Logistics Command and Control (Log C2)

As an element of GCSS-MC, Marine Corps Logistics Command and Control gives commanders logistics C2 capability within all elements of the MAGTF by providing unique logistics planning and execution tools. With the MAGTF still using Marine Corps legacy logistics processes and applications, this deficiency can be solved by the Common Logistics Command and Control System (CLC2S). The CLC2S automated logistics planning and execution tools are

interoperable with current and emerging joint processes and systems.¹⁴ CLC2S will be resident on GCSS-MC, operating over existing joint networks.¹⁵ *MCDP4* states that, "Effective command and control of logistics helps to anticipate demand, enables the tailoring of resources to specific needs, and provides responsiveness to the requirements of the operating force."¹⁶

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)

To counter the challenges of asset and in-transit visibility, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags are now being utilized on all Marine Corps sustainment cargo. This technology provides the visibility that plagued OIF I. Distribution teams with "interrogator" systems will employ RFID visibility to the tactical level.¹⁷ Full integration throughout the Marine Corps must be achieved.

Electronic End-to-End Combat Contracting Tools

Contracting teams have been effective in OIF contracting transportation, food service, and maintenance support from the global market place.¹⁸ Over \$700 million dollars worth of contracts were awarded by the contracting teams.¹⁹ The implementation of the Battle Ready Contingency Contracting System will allow contracting officers the ability to utilize automated contract writing to further

streamline logistics sustainment in theatre for items not available through the regular supply system.²⁰ Employment of these tools are essential to operational sustainment.

VI. COUNTER-ARGUMENT

There is an argument that the Marine Corps should rely on the larger sister services to test, field, and present effective logistics systems rather than expending its own limited resources. Because Marine logistics in OIF made it possible for maneuvering forces to move across great distances, some argue that Marine logistics is effective and should not be changed. With S&RL, not only can Marine logistics be even more effective, it can also be more efficient. Since there were logistical shortfalls in OIF, the need for modern logistics approach is undeniable.

VII. CONCLUSION

Ultimately, for mission accomplishment in a joint environment, new IT tools and processes must be implemented into United States Marine Corps logistics. The USMC Sense and Respond Logistics approach is a solution to the current USMC logistics' disparate manual processes and legacy applications used today. Significant strides towards this goal must be accomplished within the next 12 to 24 months.

Notes

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- ¹ MCDP4, *Logistics*, 1.
- ² Marine Corps Concepts and Programs 2004, 65.
- ³ Testimony of Brigadier General Edward G. Usher III, Director Logistics Plans Policies and Strategic Mobility, United State Marine Corps, 2.
- ⁴ Marine Corps Concepts and Programs 2004, 64.
- ⁵ MCDP4, *Logistics*, 57.
- ⁶ Testimony of Brigadier General Edward G. Usher III, Director Logistics Plans Policies and Strategic Mobility, United State Marine Corps, 6.
- ⁷ Marine Corps Concepts and Programs 2004, 65.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Testimony of Brigadier General Edward G. Usher III, Director Logistics Plans Policies and Strategic Mobility, United State Marine Corps, 5.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Marine Corps Concepts and Programs 2004, 66.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 67.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ MCDP4, *Logistics*, 99.
- ¹⁷ Testimony of Brigadier General Edward G. Usher III, Director Logistics Plans Policies and Strategic Mobility, United State Marine Corps, 3.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 4.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.

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MCDP4, *Logistics*, 1-99.

Testimony of Brigadier General Edward G. Usher III,
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